It's the EU immigrants stupid! UKIP's core-issue and populist rhetoric on the road to Brexit

Abstract

The 2016 vote to leave the European Union was one of the biggest developments in recent United Kingdom political history. Only one political party was wholly united for Brexit – the United Kingdom Independence Party. This research finds that in the years leading up to Brexit, UKIP presented themselves as a rigid core-issue complete-populist party. Content analysis shows how pervasive the EU was in much of party output and in contemporaneous newspaper coverage of the party. The party also utilizes complete-populist rhetoric, with 'othering' populism as the most prevalent form. The consistent concentration on the EU collocated with populist messaging, in both news releases and select newspaper coverage may have helped afford UKIP issue-eliteness in the referendum campaign. But this same work may have also ultimately contributed to make them irrelevant by 2017, and possibly moribund by 2018.

Key words: Populism; minor party politics; political communication; content analysis; Brexit

The United Kingdom woke up on June 24, 2016 to one of the biggest shocks in recent political history. The country had voted in a national referendum to leave the European Union. The result was initially treated with disbelief across the political spectrum. This was not the result expected, or campaigned for, by most of the political parties in the UK. The governing Conservative party, though split on the issue, overall campaigned strongly to remain. The Prime Minister, Chancellor and most of the Government front bench were in the Remain camp. The main opposition party, Labour, also strongly campaigned to Remain. The Liberal Democrats aligned, as did the Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties and most of the Northern Ireland parties. Yet, despite all these parties being in alignment, the British public voted to leave by a 52 to 48 margin.

Analysis of why the UK voted for Brexit is ongoing; recent models reported in the media (see Singh, 2016) seem to indicate that the referendum motivated a large swathe of non-voters to turn up to the polls (around 2.8 million people, or 6% of the electorate). They voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU; a sufficient turnout to sway, though clearly not enough to solely account for, the result. These figures speak to a wider story that the vote represented a rejection of politics as usual; millions of people voted counter to how their party was telling them to vote, millions more non-voters turned up. Perceived wisdom is that voters should respond cogently to their party's position on a policy (Cohen, 2003). Homogenous elite framing should be able to shape public opinion on an issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Slothuus and de Vreese (2010) concluded that issue framing is more likely followed when presented from a citizen's 'own' party. These events appear to question these previously empirically demonstrated assumptions.

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was united in embracing the Leave campaign, playing an important role in mobilizing their supporters to both campaign and vote, and perhaps reaching and convincing many of the 2.8 million non-voters who turned up. They were able to do

this from a position of relative strength following their steady increase in support in recent years, culminating in the 3.8 million votes they received in the 2015 General Election. Yet twelve months on from the referendum, in the snap General Election of 2017, the UKIP vote almost completely disappeared; down from 12.6% of votes cast in 2015 to just 1.8%. In 2018, things got worse for the party as they lost 123 of 126 local council seats they were defending.

This research examines what was being said *by* UKIP and what was being said *about* UKIP in the years leading up to the EU referendum, and the role this may have played in the rise and fall of the party and the referendum result.

UKIP – from fringe to influential

UKIP took its current name in 1993, having evolved from the Anti-Federalist League. Their central policy platform has been the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from European political structures – the 'Independence' in their name. Since its establishment it has moved from being a fringe protest party to one with modest political power in the UK landscape. In the 2015 General Election, they retained one MP (they had two prior to the election). It is also of note that they placed second in 120 seats, mainly behind Conservative candidates, but also on 42 occasions behind Labour candidates. By 2016, they had 22 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), six National Assembly seats in Wales, and almost 500 councillors at local government level. Cushion et al. (2015) argue that in the 2014 European election cycle, UKIP were prominent agenda-setters, though the authors note that this was a 'second-order' election. Clarke et al. (2016) demonstrate through ten years of survey data how UKIP had previously benefitted from growing Euroscepticism and anti-immigration attitudes.

They are a right-of-centre party within a UK context, though some policies, such as support for the National Health Service and housing investment, defies in some ways a simplistic dichotomous categorization; Abedi and Lundberg (2009), and Pelinka (2013) categorize them as a 'Right-wing Populist' party.

Conceptualization of populism

The term 'populism' is a loose and somewhat amorphous construct. There is not a singular definition as to what a populist party may look like or populist language sound like, but prior work has established useful typologies. Stanyer et al. (2017) argue that UKIP conform to Jagers and Walgrave's (2007) typology as 'complete populists'. Complete populist parties, it is argued, make appeals across three broad areas. The first populism trope is appeals to ordinary people. In this study, this is conceptualized as rhetoric around terms such as 'working-people', 'the average man', and 'common sense' for example. The second prong of populist discourse is anti-elite appeals. This may be discussion centred on 'the rich', or establishment figures, or political correctness (a particularly popular folk-devil for right-wing populists). The third prong is othering – language intended to demarcate between in-group and out-groups. In this context othering language is characterized as specifically including the in-group of Britishness, e.g. 'British people', 'British jobs,' and also illustrating difference from Britishness, e.g. foreigners, immigrants, Muslims.[1] Edwards (2012) illustrates through Critical Discourse Analysis how the British National Party constructed 'in-groups' in their messaging – the use of 'British' and 'our' being of particular importance. This work helped capture the less overt othering undertaken by the BNP, and is apposite for use with UKIP, who are careful to avoid accusations of racism or xenophobia, and therefore their othering is sometimes quite subtle. Akkerman argues that centre-right parties tend to approach immigration more from a position of defending 'national security

and national communitarian values' (2012: 556) rather from simple xenophobic positioning, therefore terms such as 'our communities/ citizens/ people' were also included as populist language in this work.

Another common, though not requisite feature of complete populism is the presence of a dominant charismatic leader (Stanyer et al., 2017). UKIP was led intermittently from 2006 to 2016 by Nigel Farage. He has been a controversial, but clearly influential, presence on the UK political scene, and by far the most prominent UKIP politician; internal party accusations of him being a shameless attention-seeker mitigated by his ability to generate attention for the party. Farage is recorded as having the eleventh highest number of appearances on the UK flagship political programme *Question Time* and, in 2013, was voted the second most influential right-winger in the country by the *Daily Telegraph* (March 10, 2013). For a decade, Farage and UKIP were essentially synonymous.

Political press and news releases

The UK has an historically partisan press; newspapers do overtly support and endorse certain parties. Endorsements of party or policy traditionally were restricted to the opinion pages, but it is widely accepted that the traditional wall separating opinion and news has all but disappeared in many media. Perhaps the perfect encapsulation of this is the notorious instance of the coverage of Labour leader Neil Kinnock prior to the 1992 General Election. The assertion that it was the *Sun* 'wot won it' was later questioned by Curtice (1999). However, Reeves et al. (2016) used the natural experiment of the *Sun* switching allegiance from the Conservatives to Labour in 1997, and back again in 2010, to argue perhaps it was the *Sun* 'wot won it' in 2010. The media it seems

maybe can have the ultimate electoral influence, which is partly why parties expend so much time and effort in attempting to influence media content.

Newspapers are also able to promote their favoured party at the expense of rivals by their gatekeepers allowing messages from one to pass and not the other. Letters to the editor, opinion pages and particularly news releases are all avenues utilized by political parties for self-promotion. The extent of how much these 'information subsidies' (Gandy, 1982) are prevalent in modern news media concerned Franklin and Richardson (2002), Street (2010) and Lewis et al. (2008). Brandenburg (2006) recorded the extent of party investment in press releases and found strong evidence of their impact on media agenda (Brandenburg, 2002).

Aalberg and de Vreese (2017) argue that populist parties are more reliant on media coverage to disseminate their message as they lack the party organization of larger and more established parties. At its peak, in 2015, UKIP membership was around 47,000, falling to 21,000 by 2018. The Liberal Democrats and Conservatives both reported over 100,000 members and the Labour Party over 500,000 in 2016. Mazzoleni, Stewart and Horsfield (2003) argue that populist communication appeals to commercial media producers as controversy has proven attractive to consumers, who, in turn, are attractive to advertisers. This can be illustrated in reference to coverage of Nigel Farage following the election leaders' debate in 2015. Farage made a controversial point about HIV sufferers coming to the UK for treatment. This was the topic covered extensively in reference to Farage by most media outlets, and a prominent lede in coverage of the debate itself, gaining prominence on the issue for UKIP (an example of what Deacon and Wring (2016) amusingly identify as the UKIP 'shock and awful' strategy).

This research analyses the rhetorical efforts made by UKIP from 2009 to 2016 to examine how they used populist messaging, the extent to which such messaging was used to reinforce the party's core anti-EU message, and how this messaging was reported by UK newspapers. The guiding research questions are as follows: to what extent, and in what form, did UKIP utilize populist messaging in their public communications during this period? How closely did they collocate populist messaging with their core anti-EU message? How much of this messaging was retransmitted by UK newspapers?

Methods

News Releases

UKIP's public communications were operationalized as the 'news' section of their website. Over the period of study, the section had a variety of titles, but appeared to be consistent in serving the same purpose of disseminating information directly to the public and to the media. At times, the section was used as a repository of what appear as traditional press or news releases (this latter term is adopted hereafter) – that is, a typical inverted pyramid type story with quotes from prominent UKIP officials. At other times, it was used to synopsize and signpost extant (friendly) media stories about the party. Other news releases promote UKIP events or serve as opinion pieces. The archive of news releases was collected from the live www.ukip.org website and utilization of the Internet Archive Wayback Machine (https://web.archive.org/web/*/ukip.org). Although the wayback machine scraped the UKIP website frequently over the period, it is unclear whether a complete archive of releases was assembled – obviously the case with most archival reconstruction is that completeness is unknown. However, a collection of 2,390 news releases (620,000 words) was collected from the period January 1 2009 – June 30 2016.

This period covers two European Elections, two General Elections plus the EU referendum. Examining the number of releases in six-month increments reveals a low of 53 releases from January–June 2011 to a high of 302 in January–June 2016. These differences could be as a result of missing data from the archive or simply from a result of less communication activity (or indeed a combination). There are factors which suggest it is more likely the latter than the former. Firstly, the way the UKIP releases are assembled allowed for numerous captures of the site to be examined and data gathered. Secondly, there is face validity in the trends of numbers of stories written – the most productive periods of output were during election cycles with the high point being during the run-up to the Brexit vote.

A random selection of one hundred collected releases was read in detail to iteratively develop a coding scheme which utilized indicator words and phrases as evidence of the story containing pertinent elements; hereafter 'n-grams' is used to encompass words and phrases, with $1 \leq n \leq 3$. The n-grams were coded for: populist language appealing to the people (people-populist); populist language related to elites (elite-populism); populist language related to excluding/othering (other-populism). It is worth noting that n-grams indicative of coverage of immigration were categorized as other-populism rather than within a policy area. This is because, almost by definition, immigration is an othering construct – immigrant as a category is inherently demarcated from non-immigrant, or in popular parlance evinced in the UKIP stories, 'native', or 'citizen.' Bale (2013: 26– 27) notes how a populist tone has long been used in connection with immigration; he includes an example of the UK Conservative Party using anti-immigration populist language in a *1904* election leaflet!

Also established was an n-gram list indicating discussion of the European Union, and n-gram lists indicative of coverage of the following policy areas: the economy, transport, environment,

law and order, social welfare, health, education, and defence. These policy categories cover the most popularly covered policy areas found in the news release random sample, and are typically common policy areas of UK political concern which conform to, and build on, prior work (e.g. Franklin and Richardson, 2002).

Initial n-grams from the close read were tested on the full corpus of releases to check whether the n-gram was a sufficiently reliable indicator of the presence of the topic under which it was classified. For example, after testing, 'Europe' was considered too vague to include as an indicator of language centred on the European Union. Even though it was frequently used as a synonym for the EU, it was also on many occasions used in its geographical sense. However, 'European Parliament', 'European Council', 'EEC', and of course 'European Union' were able to be included.

A full list of indicator words, lemma and phrases is contained in appendix one for populism and EU n-grams, and policy n-grams in appendix two. Most of these words and phrases are generic terms applied within these policy areas, but some are terms which have specific meaning with their use by UKIP. Examples here include, 'green orthodoxy' which is used by UKIP to describe the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change; 'Brussels', 'Strasbourg' and 'Lisbon' are all used exclusively as shorthand to refer to European Union structures or treaties.

The natural language processing software Wordstat was utilized to record the presence of n-grams in the releases. Petrocik et al. (2003) argue that the presence of indicator n-grams can be used as an appropriate index of the presence of a particular issue. The pre-testing of n-grams allows for a reasonable level of confidence that the list is indeed a good indicator. The restriction of rejecting words which failed the pre-test likely gives conservative estimates for the level of

presence of the elements captured. The main advantage of this method is that it allows for efficient analysis of a large corpus of data and good reliability with the analysis. Some validity is naturally lost by such a methodology; however, the findings reported (for example, longitudinal changes and inter-newspaper differences) benefit more from improved reliability than validity.

Newspapers

The newspaper archive was gathered from the Lexis-Nexis database using a search term of 'UKIP OR Farage' in the following daily newspapers: the *Daily Mail,* the *Express*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Telegraph* and the *Times.* And their Sunday sister publications: the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Observer,* the *Independent on Sunday*[2], the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Times*. Henceforth, for efficiency of language, the name of the daily newspaper is typically used to refer to both the daily edition and Sunday sister publication. Farage was included as a search term as he proved to be such a dominant figure in the coverage and was also the only UKIP figure ever referred to without an attendant UKIP tag.

'Red-top' (Rooney, 2000) newspapers were not included for analysis due to the frequent discursive differences used in those publications to the 'mid-market' and 'quality' broadsheets. It was felt that these differences could unduly impact on the validity of the n-gram analysis. Crystal and Davey cautioned back in 1969 about the discursive differences between tabloid[3] and broadsheets; a caution reiterated by Fowler (1991) who argued tabloid language to be of a particular linguistic style. Rooney (2000) characterizes red-top language as intended to 'maximize entertainment over information' (p. 91), and even argues them to be 'separate cultural artefacts from newspapers proper' (p. 102). Rooney (p. 92) also points to the differentiation between the red-tops and 'compact' newspapers, such as the *Daily Mail* (the *Express* is typically

categorized alongside the *Mail*). Other authors have used 'middle' (Connell, 1998) or 'serious popular' (Sparks, 1992, p. 37) to describe these newspapers. These (and other) authors are also less strident than Rooney, allowing the red-tops/tabloids to be considered as 'newspapers proper' but as a distinct category. The *Financial Times* was not included given its global focus and although it, of course, covers politics, its emphasis on economic and business news makes it distinct to the other newspapers here considered.

An initial read of a random selection of stories illustrated that frequently much of the story did not pertain to UKIP. This was particularly true at election periods when 'horse-race' journalism dominated, with UKIP often restricted to simple 'also-ran' status. Therefore, to facilitate an improvement in data pertinence, the Key Word in Context (KWIC) facility in Lexis-Nexis was utilized. This was set to provide a window of text of 25 words before and after the key word. This provides a standardized unit of analysis of 51 words. The software Wordstat was again utilized to check for presence of pertinent n-grams, ensuring consistency of method through the two halves of data analysis. Over 43,000 KWIC extracts were included in the analysis.

A standardized metric of the rate of usage of n-grams was developed – this was simply the n-gram count per thousand words of news release or newspaper extract.

Findings

European Union and policy coverage in news releases

The UKIP archive data was split into six-monthly intervals to enable tracing of longitudinal changes in the discourse; dividing years into January to June and July to December also neatly enables comparison between election and non-election periods. All the major elections during this period, plus the EU referendum, occurred in May or June, therefore the first half of

election/referendum years (2009, 2010, 2014, 2015, and 2016) were considered as election periods (the referendum is hereafter included within this category).

Figure one illustrates how the rate of use of policy indicator n-grams did trend up over the period, while the use of EU indicator n-grams was fairly volatile over the period with no discernible trend direction (both plotted on the primary y-axis). As might be expected, the rate of EU n-grams rose sharply before the 2016 referendum.

The ratio value (EU n-grams divided by policy n-grams) plotted on the secondary y-axis illustrates interesting findings. The party appeared to make a concerted effort to move beyond just talking about the EU following the 2009 European Elections when they were mentioning the EU at twice the rate of *all* the considered policy areas. Over time the ratio value is trending down, a measure which can be interpreted as showing that the party is concentrating more on policy areas other than the EU. However, the extent of EU language is still quite remarkable; the ratio being on average around 0.9. This effectively means that over the entire time-period, the EU is mentioned almost as much as *all the policy areas combined*. Perceived wisdom is that core-issue parties must expand their policy interests in order to gather greater support; UKIP's efforts to do this appear to be marginal at best.

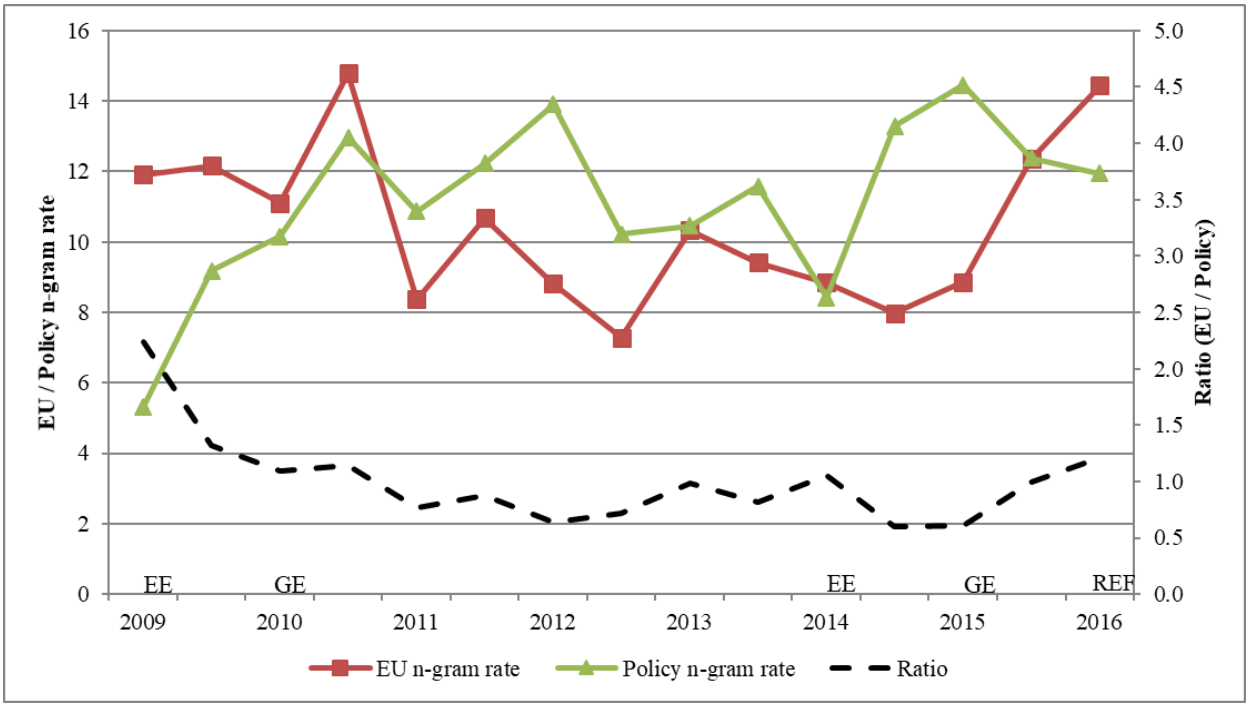

Figure 1: EU and policy word n-gram rate (primary y-axis) and the ratio of EU/Policy (secondary axis). The labels here, and in subsequent figures, refer to important national elections:
EE = European elections, GE = General elections, REF = EU referendum.

Populist language in news releases

Figure two illustrates how the rate of different typologies of populist rhetoric has changed over time. There was a visible increase in the rate of other-populist rhetoric being used from 2012 through 2013, and a similarly sharp increase in elite-populism at a slightly later period. At the end of this overall escalation of populist rhetoric were the very successful Euro elections in May 2014 – UKIP's 'political earthquake' (Cushion et al. 2015). These authors found that UKIP leader Nigel Farage did appear to attract a disproportionate amount of coverage, and that the coverage focused on issues of immigration and membership of the EU. The increase during this period of other-populist language, taken together with Cushion et al.'s findings is suggestive that the media was corresponding to UKIP output on othering (a claim examined in more detail shortly).

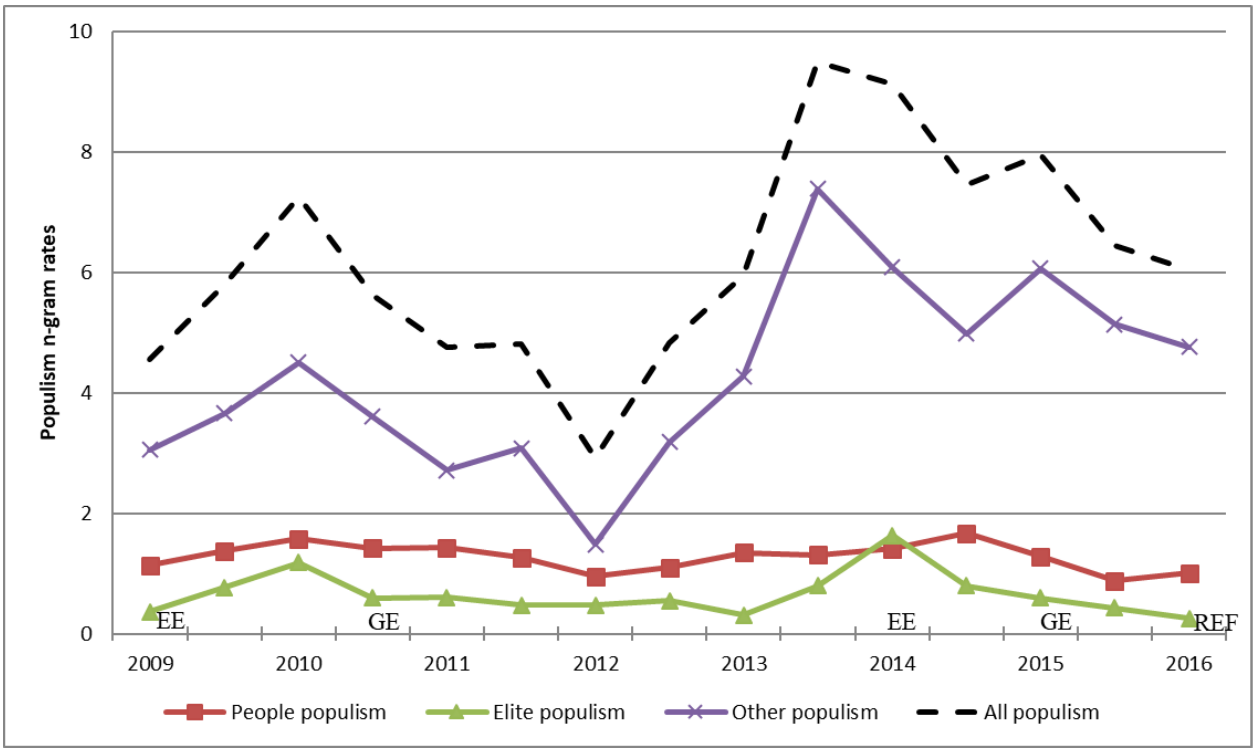

Figure 2: Populist n-grams

The data between election and non-election periods were compared. As might be expected, output frequency increased in election periods. These five periods contained 1,143 releases (282,000 words) and the ten non-election periods 1,247 releases (341,000 words). All forms of populist rhetoric were used at a slightly higher rate during election periods (6.8 all-populism rate) against 6.1 during non-election periods. Interestingly, policy rhetoric declined during election periods (rate of 10.7) compared to non-election periods (rate of 12.0). This is, of course, consistent with populist messaging in that it is not designed to win support via considered analysis of policy positions but rather through emotive appeals. The rate of use of EU n-grams was consistent across both periods.

Collocation of populism with policy and the EU

The next stage of analysis considered how populist n-grams are found in connection with EU and policy n-grams. The stories were again set into six-monthly intervals and the collocation measure of the Jaccard's coefficient[3] recorded for each period. Collocation was set at the sentence level.

Figure 3 displays the collocation of these n-grams. The primary y-axis illustrates both the Jaccard's figure for collocation of populism n-grams with EU n-grams, and populism n-grams with policy n-grams. Populist language is used more in collocation with EU language than policy language, but the difference is relatively small. Again, the data was split into the election and non-election periods, the Jaccard's for both populism-EU and populism-policy is higher during election periods than non-election periods, but the differences are marginal. Added to the chart on the secondary y-axis is the rate of populist language (previously displayed in Figure 2); this closely tracks the Jaccard's data generally. These two findings suggest that UKIP initially used populist language more around the EU, but over time collocated it as equally with policy discussion.

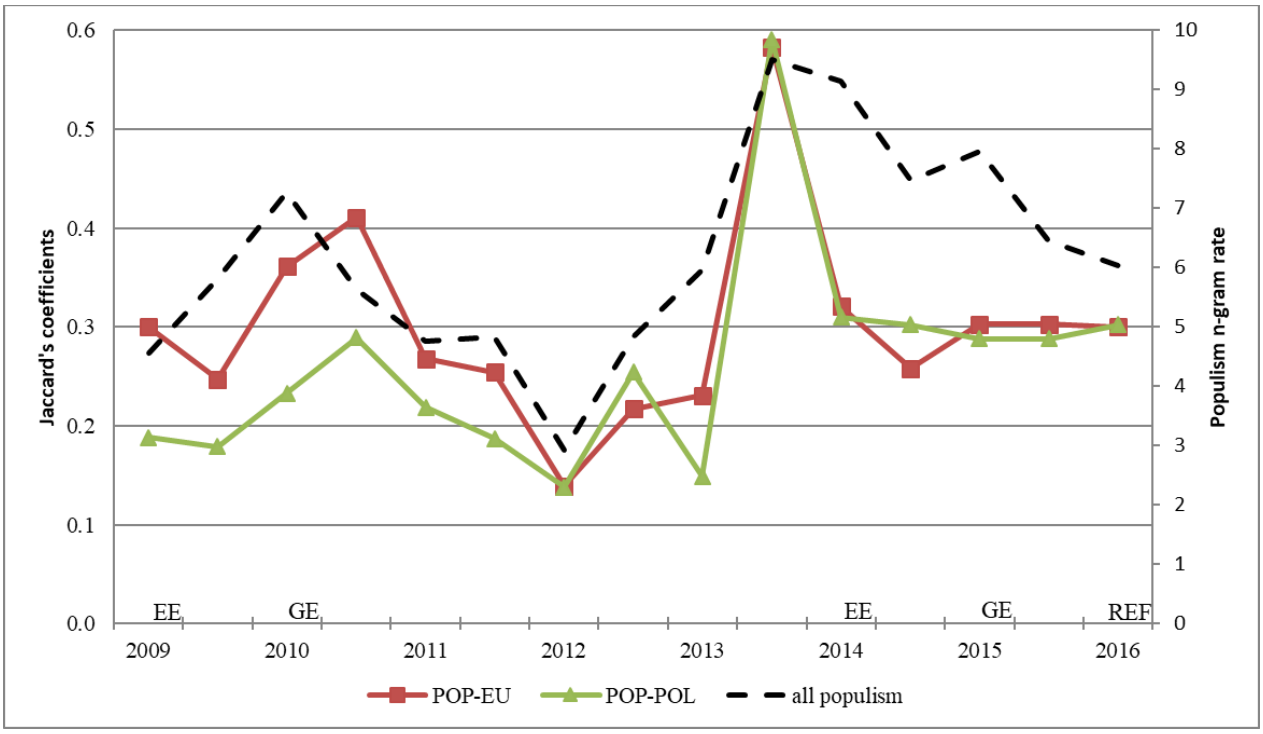

Figure 3: collocation of populism n-grams with EU n-grams (POP-EU) and populism n-grams with policy n-grams (POP-POL) (primary axis). Rate of populism n-grams is displayed on the secondary axis

Nigel Farage

The dominance of Nigel Farage is clear through the news release bank. In the news releases Farage is often simply referred to as "Nigel" – an assumed familiarity afforded to no other UKIP actors. Farage's rate of mentions when he was leader is almost double that of the rate of mentions of his predecessor (Malcolm Pearson) and successor (Paul Nuttall) during their tenures. In fact, Farage was mentioned more frequently than Pearson even when Pearson was leader. Two politicians (Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless) served as UKIP MPs during the period of this study; Farage is mentioned far more frequently than either during their MP tenures. It seems quite apparent that the UKIP press office did little to promote Carswell during his time as a UKIP MP; he is mentioned just 46 times in news releases, which is quite extraordinary given that

he was one of only two, or, in another period, their sole MP. It is well documented that relationships between Farage and Carswell were very poor throughout their time together in the party[5]. The UKIP press office was apparently staunchly in the Farage camp. Farage is so prominent that he is mentioned more frequently than any *policy* n-gram cluster except the cluster related to the economy.

Added to the *Question Time* appearances, Farage's media appearances are numerous and diverse. Deacon et al. (2017) found that Farage was covered more by the media during the 2015 election campaign than the Chancellor, George Osborne. Farage has also successfully penetrated onto popular media, he appears regularly on numerous popular light entertainment shows, and has even been the subject of a television movie. Deacon and Wring (2016) note how he has cultivated an 'everyman' image, differentiating himself from his predecessor as leader Malcolm Pearson (or 'Baron Pearson of Rannoch' to give him his full title). Farage often downplayed both his personal wealth and banking background. In many ways he became a living representation of complete populism; the everyman who denigrated political elites and was happy to say controversial things about foreigners.

Newspaper coverage

Almost 100,000 references to UKIP were found over the time period in the twelve newspapers. Unsurprisingly, the rate of reference to UKIP increased sharply over the period as party support, power and relevance increased. To give some imperfect, yet useful comparison figures: Hughes (2016) found a little over 1,000 references to the Green Party in sixteen national UK newspapers during the second half of the years 2008–14. A summation of stories 2009-14 in the same months finds over 13,000 references to UKIP (in one less year and four less newspapers). Rudd and Connew (2007) in their examination of major-minor party status found that newsworthiness

was more determined by 'potential influence' rather than simple status. Clearly, leading up to a referendum concerning the party's core issue makes them relevant for coverage, and their potential influence on this issue apparent to UK newspapers. However, given UKIP's limited political power within established political structures during this period, it is not traditional potential influence to which the media were responding, but rather the potential issue-influence UKIP were seen as having.

The newspaper extracts were also examined for populist and EU references. Figure 4 shows the rate of populism n-grams by newspaper. The most striking finding here is how the *Express* output is consistently higher than all other newspapers. The *Express* group is owned by Richard Desmond, a prominent donor to UKIP, and these newspapers endorsed the party prior to the 2015 General Election. Added to this chart is the dashed line which repeats the populist n-gram rate from UKIP news releases shown earlier in Figure 2. This shadows the general trend for most newspapers with a clear increase in the language use from 2012. The similarity in pattern of the *Express* output and UKIP output is quite pronounced; dipping and peaking in close tandem. There is clear consonance between the *Express* and UKIP emphasis in this area. The *Express* do seem inclined to try to maintain UKIP as a one-issue party. The news release data perhaps suggests that the party are happy for the newspaper to do just that.

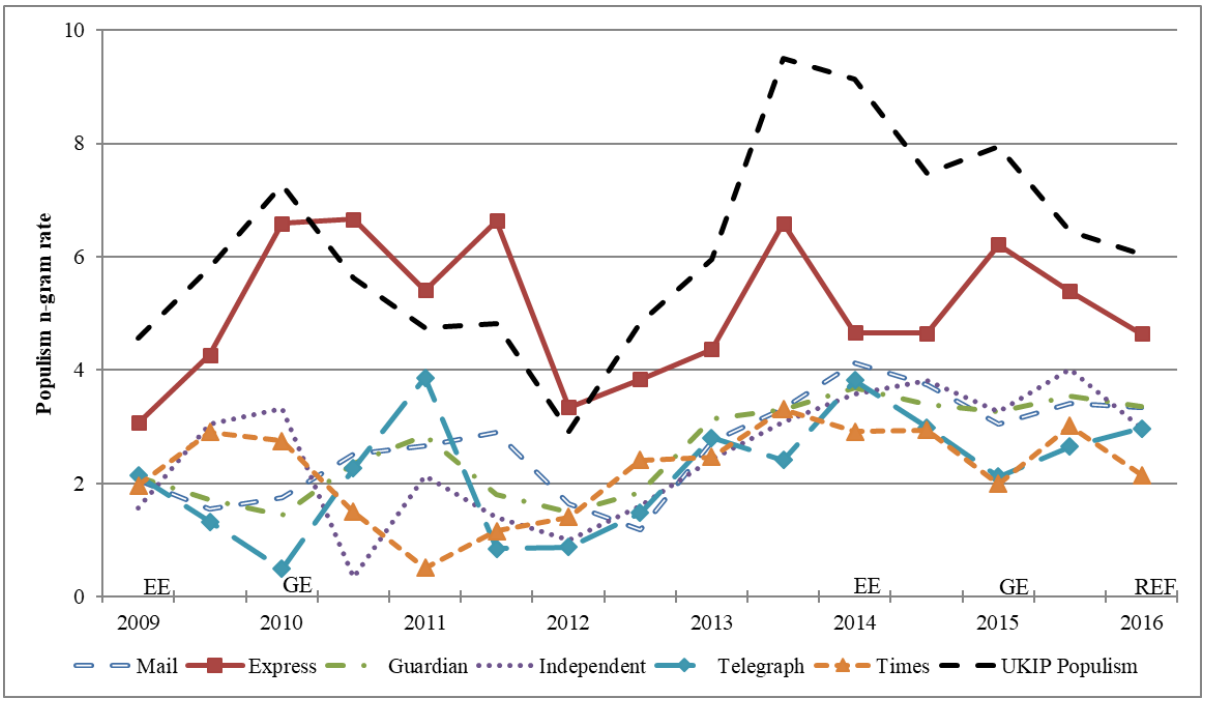

Figure 4: Populism n-gram rate by newspaper. Press release populism n-gram rate also displayed.

Newspapers were also classified into two groups, Remain and Leave; newspapers which supported the UK remaining in the European Union (*Guardian*, *Times, Independent, Observer, Mail on Sunday*) and those advocating leaving (*Daily Mail*, *Sunday/Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday/Daily Express, Sunday Times*)[6]. As shown in Figure 5, Leave advocates used EU n-grams at a significantly higher rate than Remainers through most of the period, though they came together around 2015, when sharp escalation in all newspapers occurred, as the referendum came prominently on the agenda. However, the Leave group figures are mainly a result of the *Express* data – if the *Express* is removed, the difference between the groups almost disappears.

A similar pattern is seen in Figure 6 with populism n-grams. They are higher in Leave newspapers through much of the initial period, followed by the figures having little difference from late 2012. Again, the *Express* data exert a strong influence on the Leave group figures.

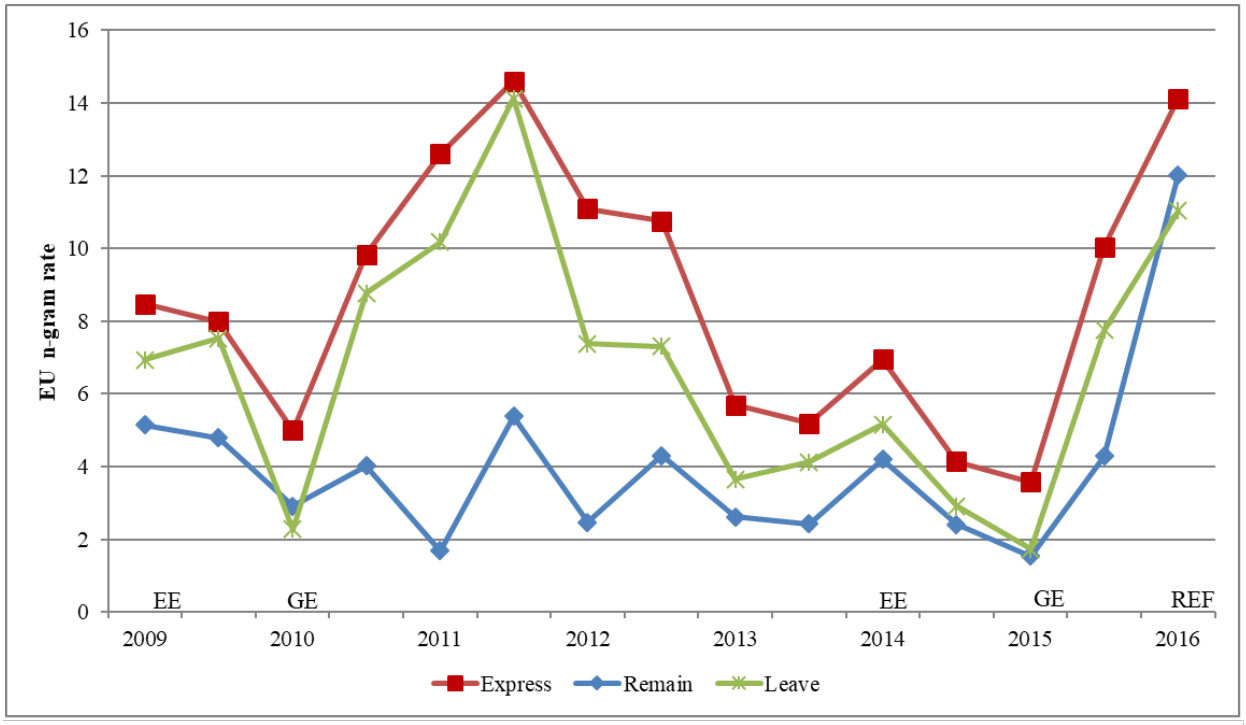

Figure 5: EU n-gram rate by newspaper groups

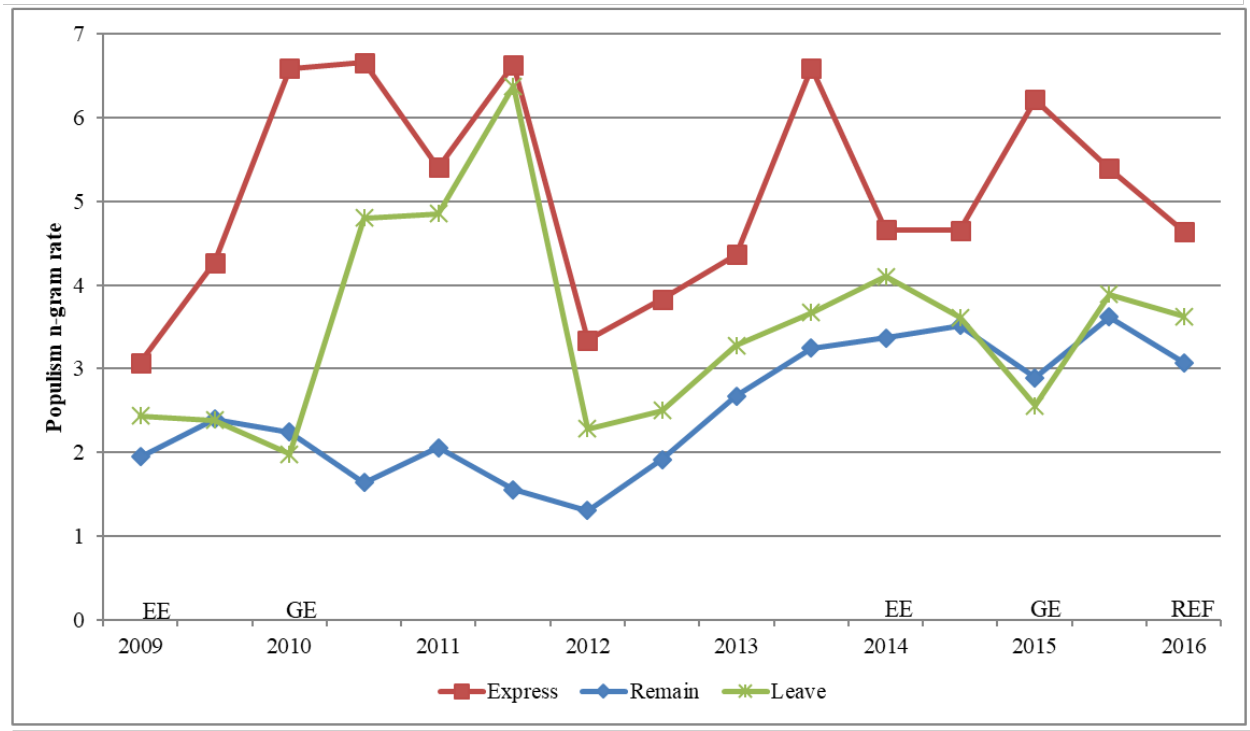

Figure 6: Populism n-gram rate by newspaper groups

A collocation examination was also undertaken of newspaper stories to assess how frequently the newspapers used both EU n-grams and populism n-grams in the same sentence. The newspaper stories were the 51 word KWIC extracts, so are a good test as to whether newspapers were collocating these two n-gram groupings around the party. However, due to this strict window for analysis, insufficient data is available to enable meaningful longitudinal analysis, so figures are reported for the whole time-period. The main finding of interest here is, that again, the *Express* group is different from the other newspapers, having a noticeably higher Jaccard's coefficient than all other newspapers. There is little difference when newspapers are grouped into Leave and Remain (Table 1).

Table 1: Collocation of EU and populism n-grams

Newspaper	Jaccard's coefficient
Daily Mail	0.072
Express	0.106
Telegraph	0.062
Independent	0.059
Guardian	0.079
Times	0.060
Leave newspapers	0.084
Remain newspapers	0.076

It is also evident from the close read of UKIP news releases that these also frequently served as signposts to newspaper stories, often stories which featured quotes from UKIP officials and/or advocated UKIP policy positions. All these data suggests that the *Express* and UKIP had close alignment on the party's main areas of concern. The newspaper carried the anti-EU message, the populist messaging and those two groupings in tandem around references to the party. The *Express* has a long history of anti-EU sentiment (Startin, 2015). However, the *Daily Mail* also

has the same history (Hawkins, 2012), and anti-immigration history (KhorasaviNik, 2009; Kushner, 2003), but does not seem to want to align these sentiments with UKIP like the *Express* do. The important distinction of course is that while the *Mail* has long been a staunch supporter of the Conservative Party, the *Express* moved to endorse UKIP during the period under consideration.

Discussion

This research investigated the content of public statements by the United Kingdom Independence Party over an important evolutionary period for the party, and how UK newspapers reported on the party during that period. The research shows that despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary, the party presents itself as a core-issue party with language pertaining to the EU permeating its news releases. The research also adds evidence that the description of the party as 'complete populist' is apposite. Populist language is present throughout much of their output; the party regularly promotes appeals to 'ordinary' people, uses language denigrating elites in society and, most commonly, demarcates the difference between 'Britishness' and 'otherness'. During election periods, it is the familiar tropes of populism to which the party turns even more frequently than in non-election periods; policy discussion was found to even slightly decrease in frequency around elections. The news releases centrally locate their controversial, yet charismatic and recognizable leader, Nigel Farage; more so indeed than much of their policy discussion.

The newspaper coverage of the party was found to also contribute to this narrow party image, and the coverage in the *Express* illustrates a great deal of focal alignment between party and paper. The data here cannot illustrate if there was a level of deliberate cooperation between the

two bodies. However, one-time *Express* political editor, Patrick O'Flynn, became UKIP Director of Communications and a UKIP MEP, suggesting remarkably close alignment in that instance. It is known that Richard Desmond is an active owner of the *Express* and, as he invested a large amount of his personal wealth in UKIP, it is reasonable to believe he may have wanted to enable some return on that investment. Street (2010) notes that 'what appears as a "news story" can sometimes be nothing more than a minimal rewrite of a press release.' An avenue for suitable future investigation would be the extent to which this form of plagiarism (Lewis et al. 2008) is found with UKIP news releases and newspaper stories – particularly the *Express*.

There are multiple exogenous factors to the rise and fall of the party which must also be acknowledged as having presumed influence on party fortunes. The UK economy during this period was still slowly recovering from the 2008–09 financial crisis; the rhetoric of 'Romanians are stealing your job' is naturally more appealing to those without a job. Conservative-led austerity had impacted on communities throughout the country, leading to further financial hardship for many. Immigration and refugee numbers were increasingly salient issues; Deacon et al. (2017) found that immigration was the sixth most covered issue on television, and seventh in newspapers, during the 2015 election campaign. It is clear how UKIP's message may have had particular resonance with the 3.8 million non-voters who did turn-up to vote in the referendum; most of them voted for Brexit.

The core-issue strategy afforded UKIP great success. Their high-water electoral mark in 2015, followed by victory in the referendum a year later saw the party achieve their central policy goal. Yet, when they tried to persuade voters a year later that they were still relevant and their policies worth consideration, voters were perhaps no longer able to hear anything from them beyond the EU. The *Express*, who had been the party's staunchest ally up to the referendum, returned to

endorse the Conservatives. Their endorsement editorial (June 7, 2017) stated simply that 'UKIP has honourably served its purpose.' The party is ignored for the rest of the article, which concentrates instead on Conservative and Labour positions. In May 2018, in English local council elections, UKIP's vote completely collapsed – they lost 123 of the 126 council seats they were defending; a catastrophic loss leading many to question the continued existence of the party.

Political scientists identify three options for established parties in dealing with a new party or issue. The referendum showed that the option of winning the argument in 'a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter, 1943: 269) had failed. There was really no option but for both the Conservatives and Labour to adopt the path associated with the work of Downs (1957), that is, change their position. Following the referendum, most major parties switched to position themselves as committed to Brexit – denying UKIP their USP.

More detailed work, beyond the scope of this project, is required to further assess any directionality of influence of UKIP and media output. Agenda-setting theory posits that it is unlikely that UKIP were able to set the media agenda, given that they do not hold elite status within the political-media ecology. Such status is traditionally reserved for *The* Government and perhaps *The* Opposition, not a minor party with no hope of holding office. Yet Cushion et al. (2015) concluded that UKIP were afforded elite status to frame issues prior to the 2014 European Election. This research suggests that this issue-elite status also extended to partly setting the media agenda for another two years. However, when that issue was removed, it seems so was the eliteness.

As outlined earlier, a significant portion of UK newspapers have long been positioned as anti-EU, as indeed have a significant portion of the electorate – in the 1990s the percent of the public wanting to leave the EU was, on average, in the low teens; by the 2010s the figure was generally around the mid-twenties (Curtice, 2016). Perhaps UKIP's popularity was nothing more than a result of timing and circumstance when they were able to 'ride the wave' (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994). Clarke et al. (2016) in fact demonstrated how UKIP had benefitted from growing Euroscepticism and anti-immigration attitudes.

Populism is a salient subject of concern for the academy. Populist movements and parties have seen significant increases in support in recent years. Of course, a party or movement holding the label 'populist' is not an inherently negative thing, yet some of the communicative tropes associated with populism can be of concern. Populist communication which establishes demarcations between groups of individuals must be highlighted; it may well be benign, but that cannot be assumed. Elites, particularly economic and political elites, should be questioned and criticized, but empty criticism without solution or alternative does little to help a democracy. All parties should appeal to 'ordinary' people, but those appeals should be based on policies which, if enacted, will actually help those ordinary people, not empty rhetorical appeals which hide injurious policy.

UKIP are a core-issue complete-populist party, and a party who were able to use such positioning to become an issue-force with political power beyond that which they should have been able to wield. This allowed them to play a major role in one of the biggest political events in recent UK political history. How that happened still requires further understanding.

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Notes

1. Clearly being Muslim and being British are not mutually exclusive, however, only around 4% of the population of the UK are Muslim. Therefore, it is a very minority religion and an 'other' from the established state religion of Christianity. Also, the close reading of the news releases allows a reasonable conclusion to be reached that UKIP themselves frequently other the Muslim faith.
2. The *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday* became online-only in March 2016. Data for this newspaper group from that point is from independent.co.uk accessed through Nexis-Lexis.
3. Red-top is used here to refer to newspapers such as the *Sun* and *Daily Mirror*. Such newspapers were typically referred to as tabloids both colloquially and in prior research (and indeed, frequently still are). However, in recent years many 'broadsheet' newspapers have adopted a physical tabloid format confusing the original broadsheet/tabloid distinction.
4. Wordstat calculates the Jaccard's coefficient as $A/(A+B+C)$, where A represents cases where both items occur (e.g. a populism n-gram and an EU n-gram), and B and C represent cases where one item is found but not the other. Coefficient figures are expected to be generally low unless applied to very homogenous texts – not the case in either UKIP news releases or newspaper stories.
5. See the following article for details on the Farage and Carswell feud: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/sep/25/ukip-new-civil-war-eu-referendum-nigel-farage-douglas-carswell
6. These classifications are based on editorials written shortly prior to the referendum – most newspapers were very explicit in their position, the *Independent* being a bit more

guarded but still widely considered to be in the Remain camp. In this section, the daily and Sunday sister publications are separated as there were two instances where the daily and Sunday versions (the *Mail* and *Times*) disagreed on their referendum vote advocacy. (See particularly the reports by Firmstone and Daddow in Jackson et al., 2016, for details on editorial positions on the referendum)

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Appendix One – Populism and EU n-grams

PEOPLE POPULISM	ELITE POPULISM	OTHER POPULISM	EU
'the people'	'the rich'	'British people'	Brussels
'ordinary working'	'establishment parties'	'foreign*'	EU
'ordinary people'	'real world'	'*migrant*'	'European Union'
'working people'	'fat cats'	'*migrat*'	Strasbourg
'working families'	bureaucrats	'our people'	Juncker
'ordinary folk'	'political correctness'	'our nation*'	van Rompuy
'common sense'	'politically correct'	'British national'	Reinfeldt
taxpayer	'political establishment'	'British families'	'European Arrest Warrant'
'our communities'	'corporate media'	'British citizens'	'European parliament'
'personal freedom'	'political class'	'open door'	Eurozone
Sign the/this petition	'political elite'	Muslim	EEC
'people's army'	unelected	Islam	'working time directive'
'hard working'	'career politician'	'this country'	Barroso
'people's party'	'old parties'	'British jobs'	Lisbon
'people's voice'	'legacy parties'	'British workers'	'European Council'
Public opinion	'national media'	'our citizens'	EAW
National opinion	LibLabCon		Tusk
'the public'	'Westminster parties'		'European election'
			Eurocrats
			'the single market'
			'European Central Bank'
			'the Euro'
			Brexit

*indicates that the word is a lexeme or stem representing further words that have the same or similar meaning - *migrat* includes migration, immigration for example. Plurals are included where appropriate.

Appendix Two – policy n-grams

Economy	**Law and Order**	**Environment**	**Transport**
GDP	police	'the environment'	roads
bank*	judge	'climate change'	rail
business	courts	'global warming'	train
tax*	criminal	'greenhouse gas'	airport
austerity	prison	recycl*	plane
'Government spending'	arrest	renewable	car
econom*	crime	pollution	trucks
recession	law	'clean energy'	vehicle
monetary		'green orthodoxy'	HS2
'the markets'	**Defence**	climategate	
'the budget'	defence	CO2 / 'carbon dioxide'	**Health**
deficit	army	'carbon trading'	'health service'
treasury	navy	'wind farm'	NHS
fiscal	air force	turbine	doctor
'Government debt'	armed forces	**Social**	nurs*
'the City'	troops	'social security'	hospital
'financial services'	terrorism	'on benefits'	dentist
	ISIS/ISIL	'housing benefit'	illness
Education	terrorist	poverty	patients
school		public services	'General Medical Council'
pupil		unemploy*	surgeon
teach*		'youth services'	surgical
universit*		'welfare payment'	'health board'
student		'welfare budget'	HIV
college		'state pension'	diabetes
lecturer		'benefits system'	cancer
tuition		'child benefit'	
		'benefit payment'	

indicates that the word is a lexeme or stem representing further words that have the same or similar meaning – nurs includes nurse and nursing for example. Plurals are included where appropriate.